

# Navigating Difficult Conversations

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I am originally from LA and was raised in “The Valley”. I am the oldest of two girls. We grew up with all four grandparents visiting our home everyday! I am married with two nearly-grown children. My husband is a Russian historian who is originally from Minnesota. We have a Doberman named Heidi who was born in London.



# What Makes a Conversation “Difficult”?

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## A Toxic Brew

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- Differing Perceptions
- Assumptions of Intent
- Impassioned Feelings
- Desire to Blame



# Getting to a Successful Outcome

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10 tips on how to be heard and still have people like you.

*“We don’t get harmony when everybody sings the same note. Only notes that are different can harmonize. The same is true with people.” – Steve Goodier*





## Tip #1

# Don't Avoid It

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- ✓ Bad feelings will fester if not addressed
- ✓ Practice makes perfect







## Tip #2 Prepare

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- ✓ Take time to clarify your thoughts
- ✓ Assume the best
- ✓ Be thoughtful about the time and location for the conversation



## Tip #3

# Make it Safe to Talk

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- ✓ Embrace a mutual purpose
- ✓ Model respect
- ✓ Use contrasting statements





## Tip #4 Listen

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- ✓ Listen because you care
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions
- ✓ Paraphrase for clarity
- ✓ Acknowledge feelings







## Tip #5 Use “Yes, and...”

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- ✓ Validates both views of the conversation
- ✓ Two conflicting things can be true at once.
- ✓ Works only if you master Tip #4





## Tip #6 Separate Intent from Impact

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- ✓ Assess what stories you are bringing to the interaction
- ✓ YOUR ASSUMPTION IS A GUESS
- ✓ State your assumption knowing it is open to revision





## Tip #7 Use “I” Statements

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- ✓ Sentences that start with “you” sound accusatory and can put others on the defensive
- ✓ Speak only for yourself



## Tip #8 Attempt a Solution

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- ✓ Determine if solution is possible or required
- ✓ Incorporate ideas and opinions already stated
- ✓ If tensions become inflamed again, stop to level-set on purpose







## Tip #9 Follow Up

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- ✓ Check-in on the other person after your conversation
- ✓ Offer another time to talk if tempers have cooled
- ✓ How can you both be better next time?





## Tip #10

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- ✓ What would you add?
  - ✓ Use the chat box to share some of your own best practices.



# Your Turn

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Q & A and Sharing



# How to Start...

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Let's practice and crowdsource a few opening lines...





- I have something I'd like to discuss with you that I think will help us work together more effectively.
- I'd like to get your perspective on what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk?
- I need your help with something. Can we talk about it (soon)? If the person says, "Sure, let me get back to you," follow up with them.
- I think we have different perceptions about \_\_\_\_\_. I'd like to hear your thinking on this.
- I'd like to talk to you about \_\_\_\_\_. I think we may have different ideas about how to \_\_\_\_\_.
- I'd like to see if we might reach a better understanding about \_\_\_\_\_. I really want to hear your feelings about this and share my perspective as well.
- YOUR TURN! Please write in the chat how you have opened difficult conversations.





**You did it!**

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# Resources

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Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., and Switzler, A. (2002). *Crucial conversations: tools for talking when stakes are high*. New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 0-07-140194-6

[So You Wanna Talk About Race](#), Ijeoma Oluo (2018) Seal Press

[How to Have a Respectful Conversation About Racial Justice](#), AARP

[Unlikely Teachers: Finding the Hidden Gifts in Daily Conflict](#), by Judy Ringer

*The Magic of Conflict*, by Thomas F. Crum

*Difficult Conversations*, by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen

*Crucial Conversations*, by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler

[FAQs about Conflict](#), by Judy Ringer



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**Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.**

*-Marie Curie*







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